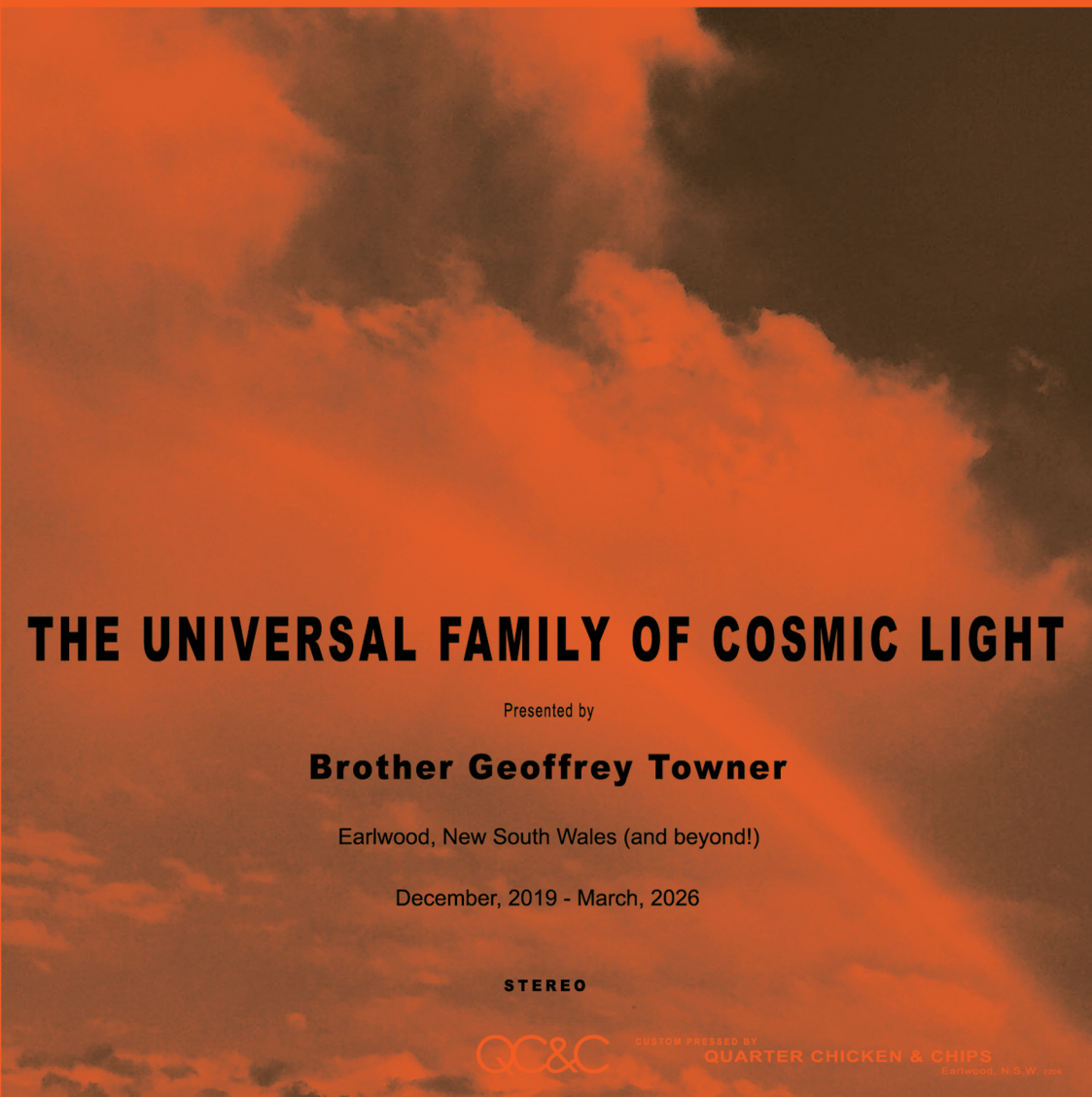
a Dedorn Dog Book 3/6

The Universal Family of Cosmic Light

Geoff Towner



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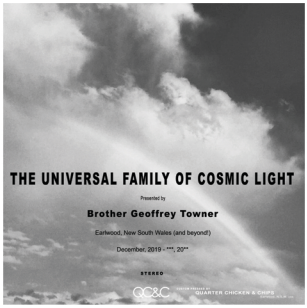

THE UNIVERSAL FAMILY OF COSMIC LIGHT

(2019-2026)

NO PYJAMAS

Is is sinful to sleep in no pyjamas?
Is it Puritan to abstain from thy flesh?
If I ask you why, will you deny?
“There’s no one else”.

Is it legal to keep unholy distance?
Is it criminal to tally unpaid debts?
When I ask you why, you still deny:
“There’s no one else”.

Is it a burden to let thee know I’m hurtin’?
Is it penitent to author in silence?
And you tell me why betwixt your thighs.
There’s no one else.

This was first sketched in September 2019 under the original title
“Aldous’s Pyjamas” (an allusion to Aldous Harding),
and was then recorded a year later in September 2020.
The song is heavily indebted to 1960’s-70’s psychedelic folk
and Xian/commune/cult music of the same period:
which formed and coloured the whole album,
from the title & cover (an homage to St. Rita’s Folk Group)
to the general vibe of a lot of the songs.
Kristen Szumyn helped with getting the “right” lyrics.
It’s about wondering if the reason your partner
is avoiding intimacy is because of “another man/woman”
and realising by the song’s end that there is no “other”.
Lots of quasi-religious verbage too.

MICROSCOPES

Saddle up, and get back on that horse.
Yes, of course it takes confidence
to deliver and get back on course.
“Use the Force”, “Praise God” and all
the strands that connect us to the source.
We stay indoors

with every little thing, every little thing
under the microscope.
And another thing takes a hammering
under microscopes.

See, I’ve given up the ghost once more.
Yes, of course it breaks confidence
to clue me in on why you’re still so sore.
Just ignore and “Praise Gargamel”,
if you think that it well help, before
the Rapture calls

with every little thing, every little thing
under the microscope.
And another thing takes a hammering
under microscopes.

You can take this sword and stone
and you can throw it out the window.
Can you fake this blood and bone?
If you can, prove that it’s all wrong.
It’s all wrong. It’s all wrong.

Sketched in May 2020, and recorded a month later,
this was the start of recording with freshly purloined “lockdown” gear
& GarageBand on my MacBook: a step up from the Zoom 4-track of previous!
The was the first of the COVID influenced songs: about trying to live life
as best you can in the new situation (and again, it’s also about writing songs).
There are references to two earlier songs:
“Get Back On That Horse, Tolnex” and “Nothing”,
and the chorus melody & rhythm references Supertramp’s “Give A Little Bit”.
Also referenced: Star Wars, Underground Lovers, Smurfs, Disney, biblical stuff.
Early working title was “Saddle Up”.

I JUST CAN'T RELAX ANYMORE

With a victimless crime, believed so benign
like climbing a barbed wire fence,
it is what it is
and I have no regrets.
For it befell fine, as we bided our time
beyond bored under house arrest,
but I did what I did.
Exceeded my punishment,
and what are we fighting for,
with that big ol' wolf at the door?
We're all broken, beaten and sore,
and I just can't relax anymore.

With the motion declined, we've been re-assigned
and tied to the railroad tracks.
But I can't ever get it straight,
and I ain't ever comin' back.
'cause it's "user defined" and we're losin' our minds
even under false pretence.
But "you get what you get
and don't be upset",
and what are we fighting for,
with that big ol' wolf at the door?
We're all broken, beaten and more,
and I just can't relax anymore.

With Eden entwined in undoing design,
we pray for second chances...
but it's all gone to seed,
and it's all gone to shit.
In cages confined for all humankind,
we inhale their substances
and we'll catch their disease.
Just get it all over with!
And what are we fighting for,
with that big ol' wolf at the door?
We're all fucked up beyond rapport,
and I just can't relax anymore.

COVID song. Metallica, Odette, the Bible, Ben Lee, future songs. Kristen helped.

FOR THE SAPPHIRES

Say you won't go anywhere.
Say you won't play any more
and stay here tonight and tomorrow.
So wait in the dark,
with our hands this far apart,
and save it for a rainy day.

I said I would love you to the end,
'til death do us part and more,
and parting is such a sweet sorrow.
So wait in the light,
with our hearts in flux every night,
and save it for our last ever day.

I waited and waited and waited
for you.
Don't wait 'til it's all too late.

This is the oldest song here:
first sketched in January 2018,
then recorded with the Zoom 4-track in January 2020,
and then re-recorded on GarageBand in December of that year.
The quality of the original Zoom version was pretty awful,
but I think some elements (electric piano?) were retained.
The song was vaguely inspired by the movie "The Sapphires",
and is my unco-ordinated attempt at a soul song.
It's about not waiting to tell someone you love them,
because it could end up "too little, too late". DO IT NOW!
References include the Thomas Crammer wedding vow
and Romeo & Juliet.

THE ONLY WAY UP

The city is in flames
and no one there remains.
The sky is scarlet red.
Soon we're all gonna be dead.
The sun is turnin' black
and there ain't no turnin' back
as we dance upon our graves,
'cause no one's gonna be saved.

The only way up is to love ourselves.

Where in Heaven are all our sons?
They're mainlinin' zeroes and ones.
And where have our daughers gone?
Tickin' unexploded bombs.
Why don't we see eye to eye,
no matter how much we try?
Guess it doesn't matter today,
'cause it's all gonna go away.

The only way up is to love ourselves.

Initially sketched in July 2020,
and then recorded in February 2021.
The original title was "The Only Way Out",
but it was changed for the positive,
referencing the Yazz song "The Only Way Is Up".
Other references include Trans Am & Soundgarden.
The song was highly influenced by Xian "Apocalypse" music,
especially Larry Norman's "I Wish We'd All Been Ready"
and the "Left Behind" series of films.

THE GREATEST MISTAKE

I
don't know where to start.
You said "Cross my heart that I told you".
I've ne'er been so cold and alone
in the universe

and I
don't know where I stand.
I'll criss-cross the land just to find you.
I've ne'er been so blind and alone
in the universe.

Heaven's sake,
the greatest mistake that I made
was watching you leaving.
Hearts will break
but the greatest mistake that I made
was letting you go.

We
get lost in false starts.
It tears us apart without knowing
if we come or we go it alone
in the universe.

But we
take hold of each hand,
as courage demands fin' of fighting.
At least for this night, we're at one
with the universe.

Sketched in June 2020 and recorded in Februaty 2021.
The song is 100% influenced by the TV show "Normal People",
based on the book by Sally Rooney.
Other references include Joy Division & INXS,
and there is a lyrical tie to "A Broken Sail" (and possibly more).
Peter Fenton of Crow was originally going to sing it.

A NEW BODY

I wake up in the morning with
a cage around my chest.
I can't believe I forgot to breathe.
I hope it's for the best.

My jaw is aching like I've gone
a round with Lionel Rose.
These clenching teeth, they give me grief
just like nobody knows.

A new body. I need a new body
that won't break.
A new body. I need a new body
that won't break.
That won't break. That won't break.

Up early every morning with
a case of restless legs,
my feet in pain. There's nought to gain,
down on my knees to beg

for a leave of absence from
the treadmill in my head;
to trade it in, and to begin
again once more, instead.

Sketched in July 2020, and recorded the next day!
This song comprises of all 100% true ailments & concerns.
Lionel Rose was an Indigenous Australian world champion boxer.
This is the only song on the album
to have a drum machine instead of "real" drums.
Production was highly influenced by Aldous Harding's "Blend".

CARDIAC

One step closer to a heart attack.
One breath closer, all too soon,
and in the name of holy cardiac,
arrest me. Cut the roses as they bloom.

I've been waiting, anticipating
death instated, but I refuse to believe it.
Just like Adam and Eve.
I've been faking, masquerading.
I got everything to lose,
but it makes me wanna sing
'cause it makes me sure to be…

I've been wailing, deliberating
choices made, but I won't be dominated.
Just like Sarah and Abe.
I've been fading, evaporating.
I now got nothing to lose,
and it makes me wanna sing
'cause it makes be sure to be…

You can cut me up with knives.
You can cut me down to size.
You can take it all apart to find the truth.
You can hang me out to dry,
gimme friction in straight lines (friction!).
Measure up and cut the roses as they bloom.

This was originally sketched with the BandLab app
in May 2020, in a much more "electronic" form.
Recording started with a few attempts from September 2020,
& the final version was recorded in May 2021 (I could never get it right!)
I had the chorus & first verse "written" in my head for AGES.
I wanted the song to sound like Bowie meets QOTSA.
It's about being all-to-familiar with your mortality
and not being afraid of death. Even welcoming it!
References include the Bible (Adam & Eve, Sarah & Abraham),
Television ("friction!") and A Gold Star Secret ("cut me up", "cut me down")

MY BLOODY CLEMENTINE

Do you feel you're still in love?
Do you feel push come to shove?

And it never crossed my mind
to ask you to be kind.

Do you feel you can go on?
Do you feel it's been too long?

And it never crossed my mind
to ask if you feel fine.

And it never crossed my mind
that you'd be my Clementine.

This song was sketched in September 2020 and recorded the next day!
It was the first of the songs that were orchestrated during lockdown,
with friends delivering their parts electronically from
Sydney, the Central Coast & rural Victoria.
The title is an obvious combination of references to
My Bloody Valentine & My Darling Clementine; "shoegaze country" maybe?
Dave Challinor called the song "Yo La Towner"
and contributed the bulk of the extra instrumentation,
which 100% MAKES the song.
It's about wondering whether you should be doing more
to maintain the health of a relationship.

HERE WE GO AGAIN

Cold reaction
at odds with a sense of satisfaction
gets me up in the morning.
With you, you know it's not a clinical love.

Holy Moses!
Covered in a wreath of dyin' roses.
Let me out of this mourning
with you. I know it's not a critical love.

And here we go settin' ourselves on fire,
so sing it to the west winds.
Here we go burnin' ourselves with desire.
And here ya go callin' me out for a liar,
restringin' all your heart strings.
Here we go settin' ourselves on fire.

No reaction,
even though you're still my main attraction.
Yet a new day is dawning
with you. We know it's not a cynical love.

This was first sketched in March 2020,
originally recorded in September 2020
and then re-recorded in February 2021 (Bon said it was too slow!).
It's another song where the melody and lyrics
were kickin' around in my head for a long time.
The song title is a reference to Arab Strap's "Here We Go".
More Biblical characters appear. More setting things on fire.
First verse, second line ties in to A Gold Star Secret's "Nothing".
Second verse, second line originally said something about Guns N' Roses.
It's about both mutual self-sabotage and
keeping the love-fires kindled regardless of hurdles.

YOU DON'T FIND ME ATTRACTIVE ANYMORE

If you light this fire, are you breaking the law?
For tonight, there'll be no feet off the floor.
So set fire, if you like, to this man of straw.
You don't find me attractive anymore.
You don't find me attractive anymore.

And I am not fighting it.
And I am not denying
your reasons for feeling so sure.
No evening of scores.

And I am not mocking you.
And I am not knocking
your door down, begging "Let me in".
No sin after sin.

And I am not promising you.
And I am not admonishing
your head to your heart to your toes,
but I will give you…

I will give you a rose.

Originally sketched in November 2019,
like "Sapphires" this was first recorded (badly)
on the Zoom in December 2019,
and then re-recorded on Garageband in October 2020.
The lyrics for the song are influenced by a conversation
with Lea involving "Victor the very unattractive man"
from the TV show "Fast Forward".
There are TWO references to Judas Priest (I was trying for a third!),
the thrash metal band Viking, Lou Barlow,
and an American remake of a particular Swedish horror film.
And of course, more setting things on fire.

A BROKEN SAIL
(or, The Four Paths To Failure That Result In Righteousness)

I came to you on a ship with a broken sail
on a mission unknown, and they laughed, “it is all doomed to fail”.
I asked “Can you sing to the winds and request that they bless me?”
You said “I believe you deceive; you have come to undress me”.

I came to you as the night was aswift creeping in,
on my knees, penitent, arms a-reached as a man without sin.
I confessed “I had a wise woman I’ve long since abandoned”,
You said “You shall find your own wisdom, as courage demands it”.

I came in white light and white heat and a broke, blackened heart,
bringing pain, passionate surges, shortness of sight in the dark.
I asked “Will thou giveth to me thee, to ease my uneasy?”
You said “Thou wouldst do what thy won’t, in thy efforts to please me”.

I came on soft waves and hard days, to be put through the wringer,
singing praises, laments, dirges; under pretence as a singer.
I pleaded that “God won’t forgive me, will you save my soul?”
You said “I will do what I can, then I must let you go”.

The original idea for this song was spawned in 2018,
around the same time as “Poor Ol’ Shuma-Gorath”;
both songs being influenced by traditional folk music (to a degree).
It was first sketched two years later in October 2020
and then recording began in February 2021.
The song is kind of a sea shanty with a Slint-like ending.
At first I wanted to write a song like “64”
by Bonnie “Prince” Billy & Mick Turner
(adapted from Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore’s love poem)
about a singular person. It was too hard a task.
When I realised that each verse could be about a different person,
the lyrics then came super quick.
Kristen Szumyn again helped with the lyrics for this one.
The title is obviously named after my friends in the band A Broken Sail.
References include the Velvet Underground, new age music & the Beatles.
There’s quite a bit of quasi-religious verbage again,
with a few made up words in there too.

CREDITS

The Universal Family of Cosmic Light
Front cover photo taken by Geoff Towner.
Thanks also to Kevin Purdy & Kristen Szumyn
(for helping me try to become a better lyricist)
and everyone involved in the making of this album.

Dedorn Dog Books
Design & layout by Geoff Towner.
All lyrics by Geoff Towner.
Front cover photo by Geoff Towner.
Thanks also to Lea Dunstone & Kristen Szumyn for the
inadvertant inspiration to do a 'zine in the first place.

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First published May 2026.

Dedorn Dog Books is a subsiduary of
Quarter Chicken & Chips Records.

UNIVERSAL FAMILY - RECORDING INFO

SONG TITLE	ALT. TITLE	ORIG. IDEA	SKETCHED	ORIG. REC.	RE-REC.	FINISHED
01 No Pyjamas	Aldous's Pyjamas		2-Sep-2019	23-Sep-2020		25-Feb-2024
02 Microscopes			19-May-2020	3-Jun-2020		1-Jan-2024
03 I Just Can't Relax Anymore			13-May-2020	3-Feb-2021		18-Feb-2026
04 For The Sapphires			22-Jan-2018	1-Jan-2020	9-Dec-2020	16-Apr-2025
05 The Only Way Up	The Only Way Out		7-Jul-2020	10-Feb-2021		11-Jun-2025
06 The Greatest Mistake			20-Jun-2020	3-Feb-2021		24-Feb-2026
07 A New Body			28-Jul-2020	29-Jul-2020		18-Apr-2025
08 Cardiac			11-May-2020	23-Sep-2020	12-May-2021	21-May-2025
09 My Bloody Clementine			1-Sep-2020	2-Sep-2020		13-Nov-2023
10 Here We Go Again			4-Mar-2020	23-Sep-2020	17-Feb-2021	14-Nov-2023
11 You Don't Find Me Attractive Anymore			4-Nov-2019	29-Dec-2019	9-Oct-2020	29-Mar-2026
12 A Broken Sail		12/10/2018	28-Oct-2020	10-Feb-2021		11-Jun-2025

a Dedorn Dog Book

The Universal Family of Cosmic Light

This collection compiles the lyrics of the album "The Universal Family of Cosmic Light", recorded between 2019 and 2026.

Although recording had begun in 2019 on two songs already written ("Sapphires" and "Attractive"), the bulk of the songs were written & recorded during the COVID lockdown era. New & improved recording gear was obtained and guest musicians sent through their parts via the internet from a variety of locations.

The music herein has been described as "metamodernist suburban psychedelia", possibly due in part to the commune/cult/Xian music that was being listened to during the time of composition. An improvement in the lyric writing should be acknowledged, and due thanks given to Kevin Purdy, whose positive reinforcement during the Geoff Kevin project helped to raise the bar in this department.

Geoff Towner is a middle-aged, washed-up, has-been singer/songwriter/musician/artist/archivist/father/failure/dickhead who hates writing songs. His music has been likened to Will Oldham, Bill Callahan, Mark Kozelek, Jason Molina, Leonard Cohen, Robert Wyatt, Nick Cave & Bon Iver.

"I really need to go home and have Valium after that" - Nick Ketley

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